

## **“The George”**

### **PORTOBELLO**

#### **Creative and Cultural Workspace**

**Initial feasibility study**

**October 2016**

Out of the Blue hold the view that unless the current owners decide to sell or lease the George there is little more that Out of the Blue are able to do at this stage to take the project forward. The feasibility study will therefore be passed onto the Portobello community.



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In its own words Out of the Blue

**IS:** an arts and education trust based in Edinburgh  
**CREATES:** opportunities for everyone to participate in the arts  
**GENERATES:** space and community for artists  
**COLLABORATES:** with artists in all media from all over the world  
**PROMOTES:** events, concerts, clubs and exhibitions  
**PROVIDES:** affordable studios, rehearsal rooms, performance venues, exhibition space  
and administrative support  
**COMMISSIONS:** art projects from the local community and beyond  
**EDUCATES:** with hands-on training projects<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.outoftheblue.org.uk/about/out-of-the-blue/>

## 1. Introduction and Background

*“Out of the Blue has from its origin been deeply rooted into the communities it serves, whether it’s a community of artists, the creative industry and audiences, or the geographic community in which it is situated. These strong relationships at grassroots level ensure that Out of the Blue keeps true to its values and social objectives, and has been identified as one of the key contributors to the company’s success.”<sup>2</sup>*

- 1.1. The George Cinema at 14 Bath Street, Portobello was originally built in 1938 serving the community as a cinema until 1961 when it became a Bingo Hall due to falling audiences in the wake of television ownership. It was one of two cinemas in Bath St, the other being the Victory further down the street.
- 1.2. The George Cinema which is an increasingly rare example of Art Deco architecture was put up for sale by its then owner at the end of 2015. Since then an application for permission to demolish the C listed building and replace it with flats has been submitted to City of Edinburgh for consideration. Since writing permission to demolish has been refused on the grounds **it is contrary to the Edinburgh City local plan** Env 2 and the **condition of the building is not incapable of repair** <http://www.portobelloc.org/pccpn/2016/07/09/bingo-hall-demolition-refused-by-planners/>. Subsequent to this the building has been sold to local builders Liam and Kevin Buckley. <http://www.buckleyhomes.co.uk/>
- 1.3. In light of the loss of studio/performance space in Portobello, the need identified for community space identified at Big Things on the Beach consultation meetings and the potential loss of an Art Deco building in the form of the George Cinema, Out of the Blue (OOTB) were approached by members of the Portobello community with a request to explore the feasibility of purchasing the George as part of the development of a “Portobello Platform” which would look at acquisition of the cinema with a view to developing performance, cinema and studio space to meet existing demand and contribute to the regeneration and economic development of Portobello. Portobello Platform is also about delivering workspaces on the West Promenade. (Subject of a separate report)
- 1.4. CaskieCo were commissioned by Out of the Blue to explore the feasibility of these ideas with Michael Davidson of Icosis Architects looking at architectural possibilities of the building. The report reflects as accurately as possible all relevant factors. The

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2010/11/22125033/9>

aim of the document is to stimulate debate and to be a starting point for a detailed business plan.

- 1.5.** Out of the Blue hold the view that unless the current owners decide to sell or lease the George there is little more that Out of the Blue are able to do at this stage to take the project forward. The feasibility study will therefore be passed onto the Community.
- 1.6.** From its inception in Edinburgh in 1994 Out of the Blue's (OOTB) mission has been to provide opportunities for artists and other people who face barriers to creativity, to meet, work, participate, enjoy themselves, and to learn and develop skills and knowledge. OOTB works in partnership to provide economic, creative, social and educational opportunities, to a significant number of people to make a real difference to their lives.
- 1.7.** OOTB has a long track record in supporting the arts and creativity across Edinburgh delivered through the provision of studio/ workshop space, classes, events and performance, exhibitions, training and seminars, markets and the Bongo Club.
- 1.8.** OOTB has a track record and reputation as an organisation using the tools of business to work with the public, the private, the voluntary and the social enterprise sector to obtain and retain assets for the benefit of artists and local communities. The different sectors and communities are encouraged to work together for mutual benefit. Facing the significant challenges associated with the economic and political landscapes, OOTB is equipped with the experience to achieve a sustainable model of development. This is reflected in its history and acknowledged by independently published critical research.
- 1.9.** OOTB creates jobs and opportunities as a social enterprise financed through trading, investment, grants and loans with an established reputation as a dynamic and innovative community and arts development organisation.
- 1.10.** Although traditionally associated with its presence in Leith and its base in at the Drill Hall in Dalmeny Street, OOTB has also had a history of provision utilising leased buildings in Portobello since 2006 where it most recently leased units from Standard Life (11,000 square feet in Baileyfield South). This space provided 13 office/studios, 1 training space, 1 dance studio and 21 storage spaces with a total of 59 people working from these spaces. A further 26 individuals trained in circus and 41 members used the aerial training spaces. 34 classes per week provided for 300 participants supported by 13 teachers. A total of 72 people made their living from the building, helping to satisfy demand for Creative Industries in Edinburgh and

supporting OOTB as a social enterprise facilitating the space. The lease on this space ended in early July 2016 due to the owner's sale of the units which will be developed as housing.

## **2. Portobello – Edinburgh's Seaside**

**2.1.** Portobello is on the east side of Edinburgh and is best known for being “Edinburgh's Seaside” with two main thoroughfares – the High Street and The Promenade along the shoreline. It was formerly a town in its own right before becoming a part of Edinburgh for administrative purposes. It was a popular seaside town during the 19<sup>th</sup> century with many attractions including cinemas, a lido and amusement parks with many Glaswegians coming to “Porty” for the annual Glasgow fair fortnight during the last two weeks of July.



A packed Portobello Beach c 1930<sup>3</sup>

**2.2.** Portobello has gone through a slow decline during the 20<sup>th</sup> century but as a result of its proximity to the relatively buoyant economy of Edinburgh has fared better than some other seaside towns and is now enjoying somewhat of a renaissance with people keen to live in the area to the extent that the local primary school – Towerbank is reviewing its catchment area to cope<sup>4</sup>. New housing developments at Harbour Green (55 apartments) and Baileyfield (600 new homes) will further increase the local population without providing additional local amenities or employment other than a low cost supermarket (Aldi).

**2.3.** Portobello is part of the Portobello and Craigmillar Neighbourhood Partnership area for administrative purposes and the most recent census data (2011) provides the following information on the composition of the wider community<sup>5</sup>. It is worth noting that both Portobello and Craigmillar have seen the recent addition of a

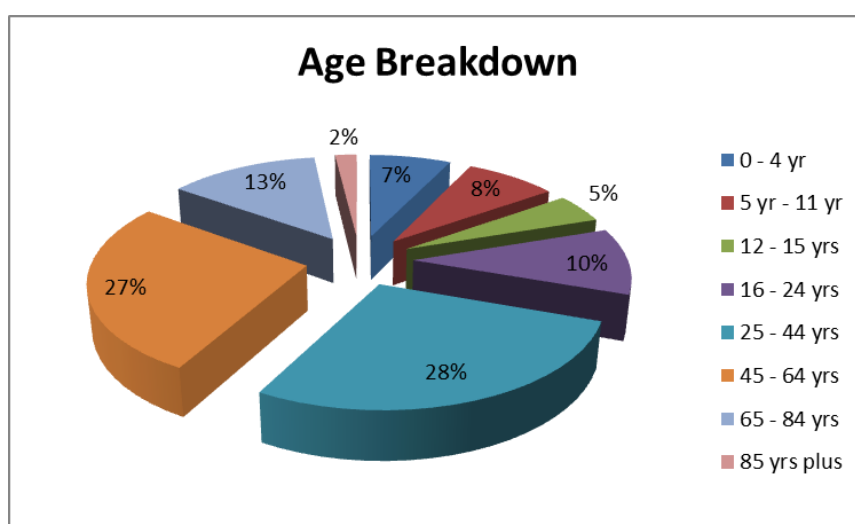
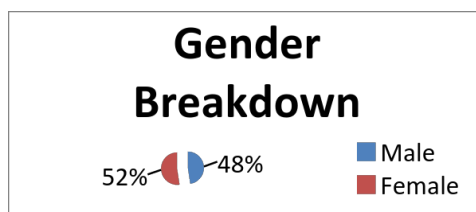
<sup>3</sup> Portobello in old picture postcards Volume 1, Archie Foley

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.portobelloc.org/pccpn/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Towerbank\\_Catchment\\_Review\\_extract.pdf](http://www.portobelloc.org/pccpn/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Towerbank_Catchment_Review_extract.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.edinburghnp.org.uk/media/323770/census\\_ward17.pdf](http://www.edinburghnp.org.uk/media/323770/census_ward17.pdf)

variety of housing developments and as a result the population data may not be accurate.

Total Population (Neighbourhood Partnership) **25,380**



Census data 2011

The largest groups by age are 25- 44 years with 28% and 45 – 64 years with 27%- together they account for 55% of the total population. With regard to car ownership, just over 40% of households in Craigmillar/ Portobello don't own a car, slightly higher than the city average of 39.9%.

**Car Availability – Portobello and Craigmillar**

Households 11,480  
Total cars 9,069

<i>% households with</i>	<i>Portobello / Craigmillar</i>	<i>Edinburgh</i>
0 car	41.20%	39.90%
1 car	42.30%	42.70%
2 cars	13.60%	14.60%
3 cars	2.30%	2.20%
4/more cars	0.60%	0.60%

Census Data 2011<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.edinburghnp.org.uk/media/323770/census\\_ward17.pdf](http://www.edinburghnp.org.uk/media/323770/census_ward17.pdf)

From the 11,480 households 1,123 work at home the snapshot below shows a breakdown of economic activity from the above census data. It identifies 1,484 people as self-employed – that’s 8% of the population, slightly higher than the city wide average. Anecdotal evidence from talking to people locally suggests that there are no local places, other than Tribe Party which is greatly over-subscribed, within Portobello to find studio or co-working space.

Economic activity					
	Male	Female	Person	%	Edin %
All persons 16 to 74	8,851	9,584	18,435		
Ec. Active	6,301	5,996	12,297	66.7	69.0
Employed - PT	573	1,961	2,524	13.7	11.4
Employed - FT	3,849	2,856	6,707	36.4	40.3
Self employed	987	497	1,484	8.0	7.9
Unemployed	610	363	973	5.3	3.9
FT Student	282	327	609	3.3	5.5
Ec. Inactive	2,550	3,588	6,138	33.3	31.0
Retired	1,074	1,415	2,489	13.5	11.6
Student	434	481	915	5.0	10.3
Looking after home	153	868	1,021	5.5	3.5
Permanently sick	649	561	1,210	6.6	3.7
Other	240	263	503	2.7	1.9

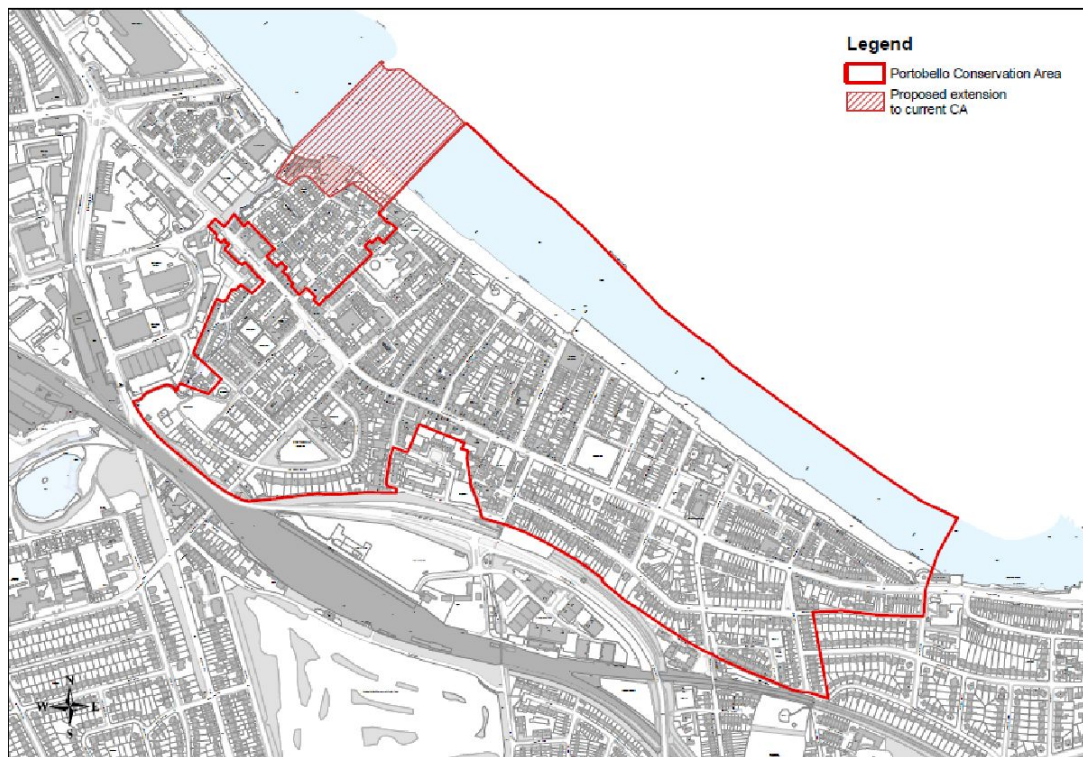
Neighbourhood Partnership, Census Data 2011<sup>7</sup>

**2.4.** Much of Portobello has Conservation Area status, one of the several conservation areas across the city of Edinburgh. This was recently reviewed by City of Edinburgh Council (19 May 2016) when the area covered was extended to include the new Harbour Green development and the adjoining Promenade. [http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/3940/planning\\_committee](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/3940/planning_committee) The report makes specific reference to “the poor quality/state of repair of the Promenade” (3.3) whilst recognising that “Portobello retains a heritage of fine buildings from all stages of its history (of which The George Cinema is one of the few remaining)... the town retains a recognisable seaside character with its long Promenade, reclaimed and improved beach and amusement arcades. It has a thriving resident population of around 4,500 and remains popular with visitors (on fine summer days the beach and Promenade are crowded with day trippers.”<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.edinburghnp.org.uk/media/323770/census\\_ward17.pdf](http://www.edinburghnp.org.uk/media/323770/census_ward17.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/3940/planning\\_committee](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/3940/planning_committee) appendix 2





Portobello Conservation Area May 2016

**2.5.** Portobello Community Council conducted a survey in the Autumn of 2011 to find out the community’s views on Portobello and how it could be improved – the most frequently raised topics were:

- Improving the High Street (37%)
- Improving the Promenade (25%)
- Traffic problems (18%)
- Parking problems (16%)
- Promoting Portobello (14%)

**2.6.** The survey found that Portobello was generally “a good place to live” with the beach, the local shops and sense of community as the most frequently mentioned aspects highlighted in the word cloud below. Portobello’s sense of community was being spurred on by a number of different initiatives including: the arts group “Big Things on the Beach”, “Portobello Open Doors” Village Fair, PEDAL (Portobello Transition Town) Organic Market, Community Orchard, Car Free Day, Big Beach Busk, Art Walk Party and Portobello Sailing and Rowing Club.



2.7. There are currently 29 community spaces registered in Portobello (Community Council website). A full list of these can be found in appendix 6.2. There is one dedicated community centre in Adelphi Grove - more info on their Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/portywashhouse/> and there is the Town Hall, run by City of Edinburgh Council, which is frequently used for concerts and events, although its balcony has recently been closed as it requires repair.

2.8. Big Things on the Beach secured funding in 2015 and ran a consultation event in May – Imagine Portobello – which aimed to think creatively about how Portobello could develop the land and seascape of the town. Some relevant conclusions of the day were:

- ***A need to strengthen the identity of Portobello as a destination and a place to live***
- ***An immediate need and longer term need for indoor and outdoor space for public and community use***
- ***Continued need for cooperation and to support existing groups and activities***
- ***Need to develop infrastructure to build relationship between artists, art and the community***

The full findings can be found at <http://www.bigthingsonthebeach.org.uk/>

2.9. There are several new community led initiatives currently underway in Portobello which seek to bring some buildings and land into community ownership including:

- Action Party which is looking to build support for a community buy out of the Old Parish Church (Bellfield Street) which is due to be sold by the Church of Scotland. They have successfully registered their community right to buy application. [https://www.facebook.com/SaveBellfield/?ref=py\\_c](https://www.facebook.com/SaveBellfield/?ref=py_c)
- Big Things on the Beach are in discussions with City of Edinburgh Council regarding the disposal of Pipe Lane toilets which may transfer from public ownership <http://www.bigthingsonthebeach.org.uk/>
- OOTB's potential interest in the former George cinema/bingo hall
- Telferton Allotments, a local group is also looking at taking this privately owned land into community ownership and has approached the Scottish Land Fund. Currently awaiting the outcome of an appeal to the refusal of planning permission for housing

**2.10.** A meeting has been held with Action Party representatives and informal conversations have taken place with Big Things on the Beach (BTOTB) to inform this feasibility study. This has been deemed important to minimise any duplication of ideas and confer on applications to funding bodies with a view to ensuring that the different projects take account of other potential developments. At the time of writing Action Party had secured funding from the Scottish Land Fund to carry out feasibility work around the Old Parish Church with a view to creating a community venue, space for community use and workshops. BTOTB have been approached by City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) regarding the Pipe Lane toilets and initial consultations have begun re a possible transfer/acquisition with a view to redevelopment (as yet unspecified).

### 3. The George Cinema

#### 3.1. History and current situation

The George Cinema (also known as the County Cinema) was designed by Thomas Bowhill Gibson (a specialist in cinema design) in 1938 had its grand opening on Thursday 30 March 1939 at 2.30 pm showing Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs and Air Devils. It seated 1,284 people with prices ranging from 1s 3d for the Balcony to 9d and 6 d for children. It was the last picture house built in Edinburgh before the second world war and was the last remaining cinema in Portobello in 1963 (previously there had been five)<sup>9</sup>. It was revamped in 1954 and used to show foreign and classical films during the Edinburgh Film Festival. The George was the first cinema in the east of Scotland to use four track stereophonic sound with the wide screen (32 speakers).

It became a Bingo Hall in 1961 and has operated as such ever since. It closed on 14 August 2016 due to the decline in popularity of Bingo (smoking ban, closure of cafeteria and online bingo). The current staff (2?) lost their jobs and the 40 + people attending have to go elsewhere to Leith, Gilmerton or Dalkeith. Existing bingo users come from as far afield as Wallyford and Craigmillar, many having attended for over 50 years and are sad to see the loss of part of their social network.

The building is still recognisable as an important piece of cinema design and was given a C listing in 1974<sup>10</sup>.

An application to demolish the building and planning permission to erect 21 flats was lodged earlier this year with permission to demolish refused in July 2016 (see earlier 1.8).



Proposed flat development from planning application

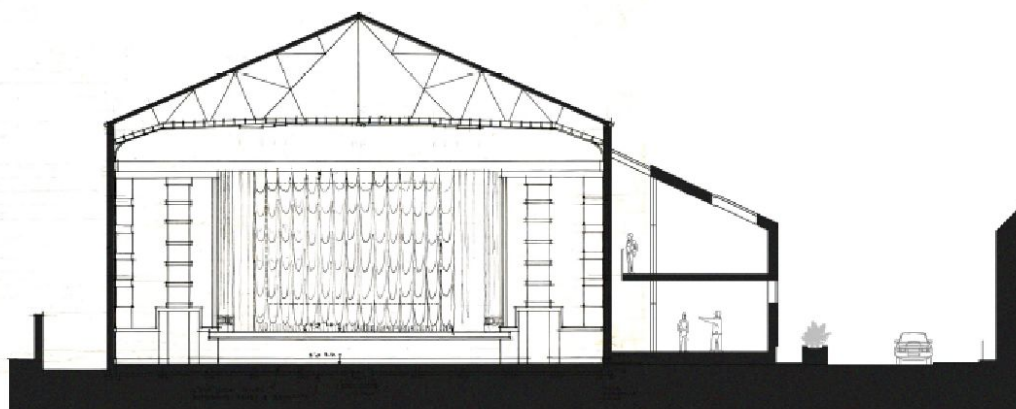
<sup>9</sup> Edinburgh Theatres, Cinemas and Circuses 1820 – 1963. George Baird.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.portobelloc.org/pccpn/2016/07/09/bingo-hall-demolition-refused-by-planners/>

### 3.2. Proposed OOTB development

As highlighted above OOTB have been requested to consider the feasibility of acquiring the building and developing it to replace some of the accommodation lost in the Portobello area. Initial plans for the proposed development will retain and restore the main auditorium, creating a café at the back of the stalls, restoring the foyer and adding a small extension on two floors adjoining the existing building to provide workshop and multi-use space.

**THE COUNTY CINEMA**  
14 BATH STREET, PORTOBELLO



INDICATIVE CROSS SECTION  
1:200 SCALE AT A4

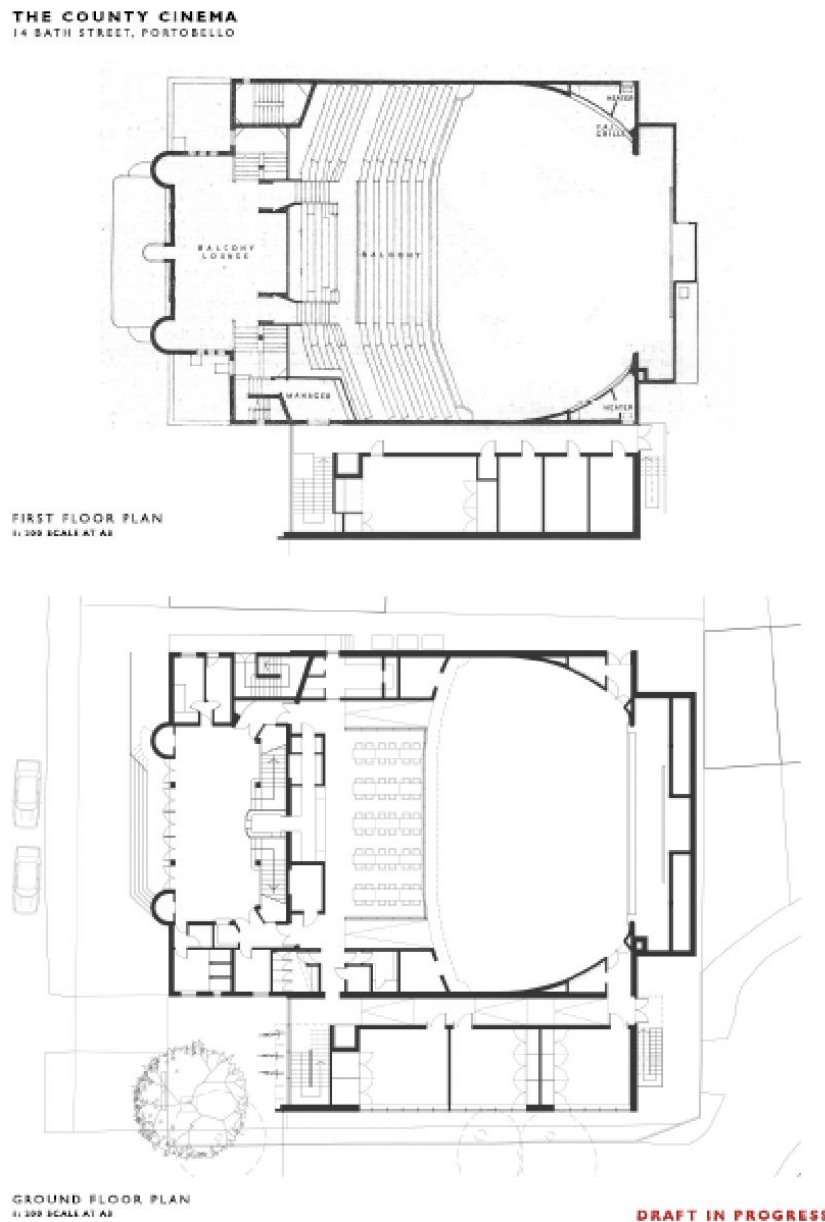
**DRAFT IN PROGRESS**

The extension would extend out into the current car parking space without encroaching on the neighbouring houses in Mentone Avenue. There are currently 3 trees on the edge of the site which have been poorly maintained (coppiced on the George side and so left reaching for light). These would be removed and replaced by a small public area seating area with a tree on the corner of Bath Street and Mentone Avenue as indicated in the floor plans following.

The workshop space on the ground floor would be accessible from the auditorium providing storage and back stage use adding to the flexibility of the auditorium. The main auditorium would provide a venue for a variety of uses: cinema, theatre (a removable stage), aerial performance and music. Refurbishment of the building would require insulation and reroofing<sup>11</sup> reducing the likelihood of any noise

<sup>11</sup> Subject to full structural survey and appropriate advice

pollution. Further detail on these plans is available in the architectural feasibility work from Icosis.



Draft floor plans for the potential OOTB development

### 3.3. SWOT analysis of opportunities presented by the potential OOTB development

The table below summarises some of the strengths and weaknesses of the proposed redevelopment of the George Cinema.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OOTB have already delivered workspace in this area</li> <li>• OOTB are experienced providers of studio and workshop space with a strong track record across the city</li> <li>• A suitable building available</li> <li>• The George location within Portobello Conservation Area</li> <li>• OOTB operate the Drill Hall on a similar basis as proposed</li> <li>• A number of examples of old cinema buildings which have been successfully redeveloped in other places</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building requires extensive renovation and adaptation</li> <li>• Owner potentially looking to maximise income from development Requires significant capital to purchase and renovate with additional funding required to kick start social enterprise</li> <li>• Will require evidence of community support to secure public funds to acquire and refurbish the cinema</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To develop a cinema as part of OOTB arts offer mix</li> <li>• Opportunity to restore, redevelop and reuse a C listed Art Deco building in a new and sympathetic way</li> <li>• Create much need workshop space to replace that lost/ bring back jobs to local area</li> <li>• Create new workshops</li> <li>• Contribute to the economic development of Portobello</li> <li>• Add to the amenity of a growing and vibrant community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning permission for flats is granted and cinema is lost</li> <li>• Funding cannot be secured to purchase and redevelop George</li> <li>• Insufficient local support to make project viable</li> <li>• Other community owned projects in Porty competing for resources (funding, volunteers, good will)</li> <li>• Possible increased traffic in and around Bath St</li> </ul>

There are many strengths and opportunities presented by the OOTB proposed development: saving a listed and iconic building, creating community and arts space and replacing some of the lost work space in the Portobello area. The main weaknesses and threats are around securing funding and support to enable the development, striking the right balance with other community based initiatives. There is currently no evidence that the new owners would consider a use of the building as a community arts resource.

### 3.4. Risk Analysis of Proposed Option

Any business development carries risk and it is essential to assess such risks from the outset and to ensure that necessary steps are taken to mitigate them as the business

develops. The following risk assessment has been prepared to support the business case. Risk requires to be assessed on an on-going basis.

A scoring system of 1 to 5 has been used to assess chance and impact of each risk. These are multiplied to give a combined score which then falls into one of the following categories 1- 10 green, 11- 15 amber, 16 – 25 red.

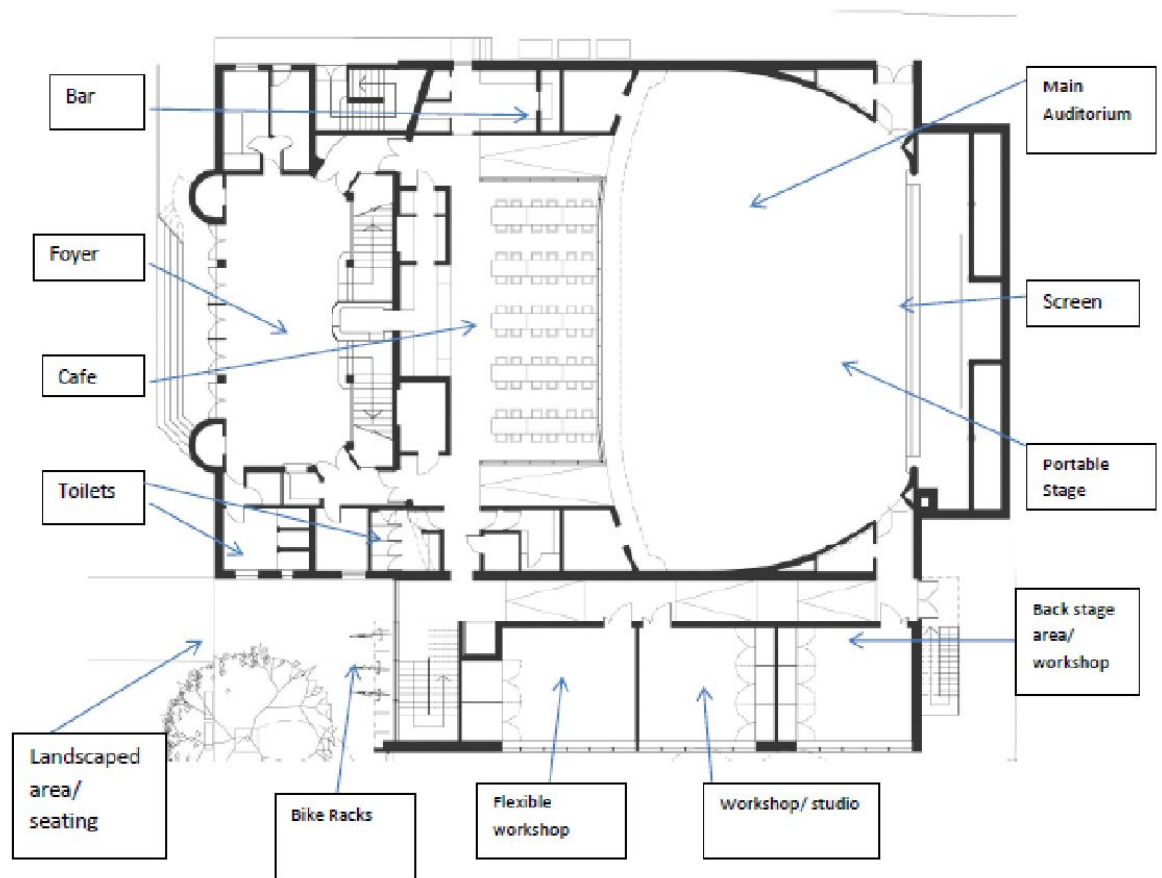
Category	Risk Description	Chance	Impact	Score	Response/Actions
Acquiring the building	Demolition order approved	1	5	5	Seems unlikely at present
Planning permission	Planning for flats approved	1	5	5	Seems unlikely at present due to previous demolition order refusal
OOBT acquire the building	Other potential purchaser shows interest	3	3	9	Prepare detailed and compelling plans, build necessary support and secure funding asap
Funding (acquisition)	OOTB fails to secure start-up funding for phase one (acquisition)	3	4	12	Explore as many options as possible, build support and have a robust business plan
Funding (re-furbishment)	Phase two costs of restoring the building and extending it (currently unknown)	3	3	9	Check building plans, secure several quotes for works, use volunteer trades people if available
Planning and building	Fall foul of planning/ regulations , change of use or necessary warrants for renovation/extension	2	3	6	Seek prof advice, work with CEC officers to prepare plans, use prof trades to deliver
Project Management (acquisition, restoration)	Ensure sufficient capacity with OOTB	2	4	8	Apply for build manager in funding package
Governance	Ensure governance structure appropriate to funding e.g. if share issue Benefit Company required – could operate in tandem with existing OOTB structures	2	3	6	Ensure board have shared and agreed vision, have relevant training and experience, experienced advisors and proper processes for informing and making decisions.
Operational	Delivery Phase - Managing of building - Securing tenants - Employing staff for day to day ops	3 2 2	3 3 3	9 6 6	Look at how OOTB manages existing buildings. Ensure appropriate operational plan. Ensure good market research re any new offers of services e.g. cinema

None of the risks so far identified are insurmountable but they do need to be considered as plans are further developed.



### 3.5. Income generation potential

The George offers a number of income generation possibilities – the auditorium, the balcony lounge, the café, 3 small work spaces on first floor (5m x 2.75 m), 1 large works space first floor (5mx 5m), 3 large work spaces ground floor (5m x 5m) all with storage, assuming the building is modestly extended as per the plans proposed .



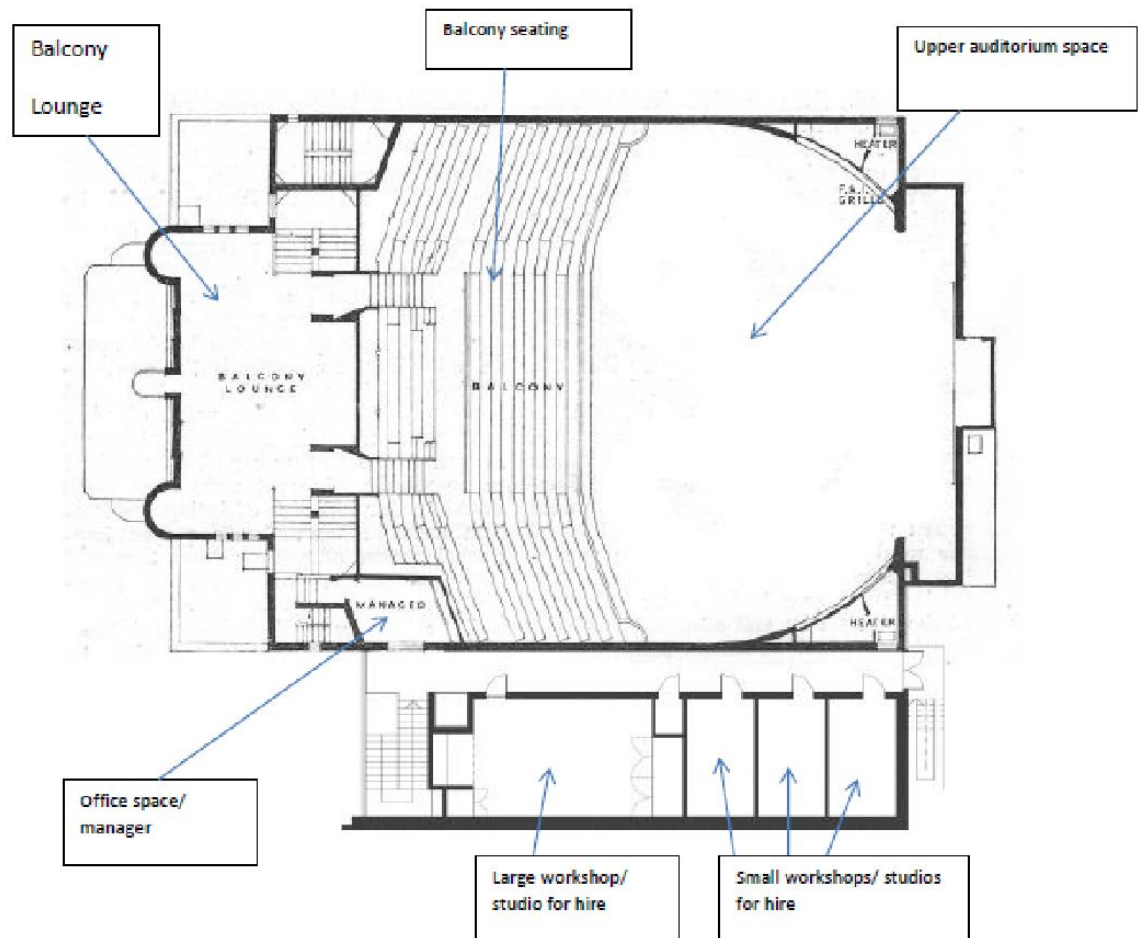
#### Foyer

The Foyer will provide an excellent reception to the building, providing orientation to other parts. It could also provide useful exhibition space, access to toilets, workshops and the café/auditorium.

#### Cafe

There are several options for the café – it could be run as a training café on a similar basis to that at the Drill Hall offering training opportunities as well as a in house and external catering service or it could develop a full catering service like the Filmhouse

Café serving food all day to support its activity programme. It is suggested that more detailed feasibility work be carried out to determine what the local market in Portobello could bear as there are a growing number of new pubs and eateries serving the community. It is worth noting that the Filmhouse café acts as an income generator to support other aspects of the business.



## Workshops

OOTB already has a schedule for renting workshop space and based on its existing model the workshops could bring in income as per the table below if all are fully let. OOTB has terms of lease and a well-established business model for doing this; it also has a substantial waiting list of over 800 clients for workshop/studio space.

OOTB is also considering a proposal for a much needed Makerspace for wood, jewelry, glass and ceramics professionals, artists and hobbyists in Edinburgh which is subject to a search for other appropriate premises

Workshops/studio Space	Monthly	Annual
Large workshop (ground floor)	£ 450.00	£ 5,400.00
Small workshop 1 (first floor)	£ 200.00	£ 2,400.00
Small workshop 2 (first floor)	£ 200.00	£ 2,400.00
Small workshop 3 (first floor)	£ 200.00	£ 2,400.00
Large workshop 1 (first floor)	£ 450.00	£ 5,400.00
Large workshop 2 (ground floor)	£ 450.00	£ 5,400.00
Large workshop 3 (ground floor)	£ 450.00	£ 5,400.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 1,950.00</b>	<b>£ 28,800.00</b>

### Auditorium

There are many possibilities for the use of the auditorium which can be laid out in many different formats on account of there being no fixed seating. Flexible seating can be laid out theatre style, cabaret style or in any other configuration for meetings and conferences. There is also scope for portable staging to be used together with the aerial space for trapeze and circus activities. It may even be possible to accommodate music events, shows and Festival events with talks, seminars, markets, events and bingo sessions to enable current users to maintain a presence in the building. A very modest programme illustrates some of the possible programming with the table indicating potential income.

Day	am	pm	evening
Monday			
Tuesday		Bingo session	Public meeting
Wednesday		Conference	Cinema
Thursday	Conference	Conference	
Friday		After school theatre group	Theatre night
Saturday	Kids cinema or theatre school	Cinema	Cinema
Sunday	Circus school	Circus school	Music night

<b>Auditorium</b>			
	<b>Weekly</b>	<b>Monthly</b>	<b>Annual</b>
Cinema (3 weekly cinema sessions)	£ 2,375.00	£ 9,500.00	£ 114,000.00
Conference/Event hire (1 per week)	£ 500.00	£ 2,000.00	£ 24,000.00
Bingo session (1 per week)	£ 125.00	£ 500.00	£ 6,000.00
Theatre night (1 per week)	£ 750.00	£ 3,000.00	£ 36,000.00
Music Night	£ 750.00	£ 3,000.00	£ 36,000.00
Circus School (1 day per week)	£ 300.00	£ 1,200.00	£ 14,400.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 4,800.00</b>	<b>£ 19,200.00</b>	<b>£ 230,400.00</b>
<b>Assumptions</b>			
Cinema - 3 weekly sessions, 150 attendees @ £7.50 per person = £3,375 less costs (film hire), staffing £1,000 = £2,375			
Event hire - up to 400 delegates @ £500 per session. Catering could bring in additional income here			
Bingo - 50 attendees @ £2.50 = £125 rising to 100 by end of first year			
Theatre night - 150 tickets sold per performance @ £7.50 less production costs (£325)=£750			
Music night similar to theatre night			
Circus School either hire or sale of classes 30x £10 = £300 or hire for £300 per day			

Even with a relatively modest programme/occupation rates it is possible to turnover £250,000 pa between the auditorium and workshop space. The Balcony Lounge can be let for functions and events if the balcony is not being used.

It is likely that any new use of the building will bring more people so a sustainable transport plan will be required to justify the loss of existing car parking space and address the already challenging parking issues around Bath Street.

### 3.6. Funding Options<sup>12</sup>

If it was an option there are a number of funding sources for the acquisition and renovation/extension of the George, for a community resource.

Two possible options are outlined below:

#### Option one:

Prepare a Community Share Issue<sup>13</sup> and offer shares for sale enabling genuine community ownership. If 800 people bought shares at £250 or 8,000 people could pay £25 then £200K could easily be raised towards the purchase of the building. It is more likely that a mix of share values be offered to enable wider participation but it is not unrealistic to assume this could be achieved. Other forms of investment could also be considered as the St Albans Civic Cinema did to acquire its building.

<sup>12</sup> NB this was written prior to the sale of the building

<sup>13</sup> <http://communitysharesscotland.org.uk/>

Once the building was in community ownership, a funding package could be sought from the new Community Assets programme of the Big Lottery <https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/globalcontent/programmes/scotland/community-assets> possibly with input from the Heritage Lottery <https://www.hlf.org.uk/looking-funding/our-grant-programmes/heritage-enterprise>

#### Option two:

Apply to the Scottish Land Fund for the purchase price of the building <https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/scottishlandfund> Pre costs such structural survey, design, energy feasibility, planning, valuation, business plan can also be requested. Once the building is secured application could be made to Community Assets and Heritage Lottery Funds as above.

### 3.7. Examples of similar cinema developments

Discussions have taken place with David Boyd who works at Edinburgh Filmhouse and who is very knowledgeable and passionate about old cinemas and their restoration.

#### Hippodrome, Bo'ness

The **Hippodrome Cinema** in Bo'ness near Falkirk is an early example of a purpose-built cinema and thought to be the oldest such building surviving in Scotland. The cinema, which opened in 1912, was built for the Bo'ness cinematography pioneer Louis Dickson and designed by renowned local architect Matthew Steele.

The name and the circular form of the building that Steele produced for Dickson might suggest that it was originally designed as a circus or theatre venue for travelling shows, but the earliest known plans, dated October 1911, show no evidence of this. They do, however, show a dedicated Operators box for a projector and are labelled 'Proposed Picture Palace, Hope Street'.

Constructed on a corner site, the Hippodrome consists of a circular auditorium with wrap-around gallery facing a proscenium and small stage. What little ancillary space was wrapped around this filled in the corners of the site. The October 1911 plans show that at this stage the lavatories were 'to be built later'. The flat roof was supported on three girders, running parallel to the screen.

In 1926, the cinema underwent various transformations by the original architect, including adding a domed roof and ticket office. The building remained in use as a cinema until the mid 70's when it was turned into a bingo hall which it remained until its closure in 1980. Thereafter, it was left abandoned and at the mercy of vandals.

The building was listed Category B by Historic Scotland in 1979, and upgraded to Category A in 2004



Bo'ness Hippodrome interior

In 2002 Scottish Historic Buildings Trust (SHBT) invited three companies to respond to their brief to find a use for the former Hippodrome Cinema. The agreement made provision for the refurbished building to be transferred or leased to the creators of the preferred scheme on favourable terms in return for their speculative consultancy work.

Reinstating the cinema back to its former use and the creation of a community space was proposed by IDEAS, the Falkirk based design firm. Although at the time the preferred option was for the building to be used as a Gym, SHBT requested that they retain an option on the IDEAS proposals.

Later, Falkirk Council initiated an HLF Townscape Heritage Initiative for Bo'ness. A sustainable use for the Hippodrome was considered critical, indeed pivotal to the release of grant funding, the IDEAS proposal was revived and considered worthy. Following grants from various organisations amounting to £1.8 million, the cinema underwent renovation from the middle of 2006. This was largely completed on 14 February 2008 when the keys were handed over to its new owner, Falkirk Council. The renovation then went through a final phase when modern cinema projection and sound equipment were added. On 9 April 2009, the cinema finally opened its doors again to the public - a reminder of the golden age of cinema.

On 1 July 2011, Falkirk Community Trust assumed responsibility for the management and operation of the Bo'ness Hippodrome. The Trust is an arm's length organisation of Falkirk Council and their Film and Media manager is Alison Strauss can be contacted on T 01324 503740

[The Odyssey, St Albans, Hertfordshire](#)

St. Albans' first cinema on London Road was originally built in 1908 by Arthur Melbourne-Cooper, the son of a local St. Albans photographer, in a bid to lift cinema-going from its lowly status. At that time, it was known as the Alpha Picture Palace. The cinema is cited by The Shell Book of Firsts to be one of the first cinemas as we know them today.

The cinema was destroyed by fire in 1927.

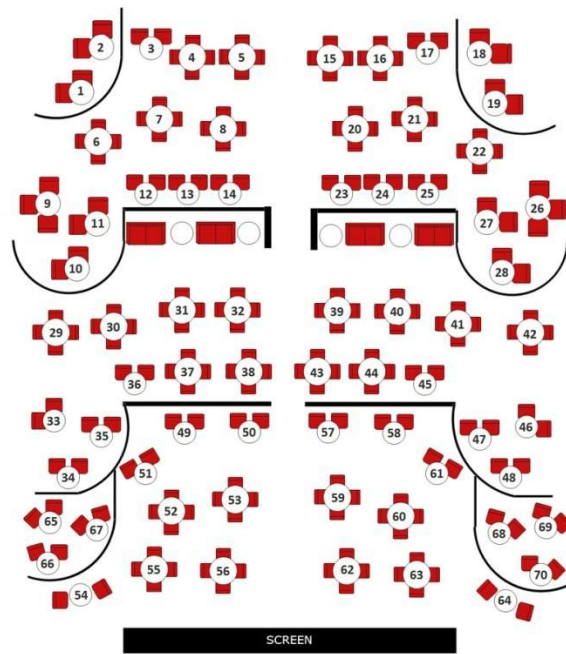
It re-opened as the Capitol Cinema on 3rd December 1931. Somewhere in between it became The Poly, then The Regent. In 1945 it was bought by Odeon, under whose banner it continued as a working cinema until its closure in 1995. It has lain empty, under threat of demolition, ever since.

For fifteen years a steady campaign in St. Albans and surrounding towns and villages has kept the hope alive to protect the building and see it returned to its original glory. This year, thousands of local people played a key role in securing the site by helping to raise £1 million in a mere, heart-stopping, eight weeks. The cinema was rescued from development by managing to Complete on the site by 9th April, and work has slowly begun to return it to a glitzy all-singing-in-the-rain, queues around the block, happy cinema again.

While the first hurdle has been leapt, there is still is much work to do. Its new name – The Odyssey (in homage to the work of Stanley Kubrick alongside the notion of journey) – was announced on Sept 12th 2010. We saw a huge fundraising push to find the £1.5million needed to bring the cinema back to life over the following three years.

It finally opened in November 2014 and now operates as a full time cinema (afternoon and evening) 7 days per week. Community backing was very important as there was no cinema in St Albans (population 140,600 – 2011). A mix of funding including private finance and selling equity from freeholding and seats was achieved as banks weren't interested in supporting the project – refurbishment costs were £2.5 – 3m. A well planned programme of themed nights and events to bring people in all year round (including summer) is run.

The seating plan for the Odyssey is very similar to what could be achieved in the George, with a flexible lower floor and fixed seating balcony (if the seating were restored).



<http://odysseypictures.co.uk/> Further information is available from Richard de Pencier [Richard.depencier@vigocomms.com](mailto:Richard.depencier@vigocomms.com)

The Odessey has a sister cinema The Rex Cinema, Berkhamsted (pop 18,100) which has a similar and interesting restoration story to becoming a full time cinema

<http://therexberkhamsted.com/> Further information is available from Richard de Pencier [Richard.depencier@vigocomms.com](mailto:Richard.depencier@vigocomms.com)



### **3.8. Conclusions and Considerations**

From this initial feasibility study it would seem that The George could have a future life providing a venue and workspaces for the community. There are examples of similar buildings in other communities which have over time overcome significant challenges to restore their fabric and purpose.

As stated in 1.5 above, Out of the Blue hold the view that unless the current owners decide to sell or lease the George there is little more that Out of the Blue are able to do at this stage to take the project forward. The feasibility study will therefore be made available to the Portobello Community.

## 4. Appendices

### 4.1. Out of the Blue

What out of the Blue currently provides:

#### OUT OF THE BLUE

**IS:** an arts and education trust based in Edinburgh

**CREATES:** opportunities for everyone to participate in the arts

**GENERATES:** space and community for artists

**COLLABORATES:** with artists in all media from all over the world

**PROMOTES:** events, concerts, clubs and exhibitions

**PROVIDES:** affordable studios, rehearsal rooms, performance venues, exhibition space and administrative support

**COMMISSIONS:** art projects from the local community and beyond

**EDUCATES:** with hands-on training projects<sup>14</sup>

**Studios** Out of the blue supports artists by providing them with work space and selling opportunities, enabling them to work as artists, and to connect to the local community to pass their skills onto others.

**Classes** Approximately 450 multi-artform classes per annum and 5,000 participants.

**Events and performances** Approximately 50 per annum. The Out of the Blue Drill Hall has been a venue in Edinburgh Festival, Edinburgh Fringe Festival, People's Festival, and Leith Festival.

**Exhibitions** Approximately 12 per annum. Local, national and international artists work viewed by total of 5,000 members of the public.

**Training/Seminars** Our facilities are hired by arts organisations and other businesses to run their own events throughout the year.

**Markets** Monthly selling/buying opportunity for community and Out of the Blue artists.

**Cafe** The Out of the Blue Drill Hall Arts cafe runs as a social enterprise supporting 24 trainees per annum

**Out of the Blueprint** A social enterprise providing work and training for young people

**Community Projects** For example the Dalmeny Street Park renovation project, #artcore youth arts project, Gretna 100- community commemoration, theatre and exhibition project, Leith Moves, theatre and visual art project investigating the hidden history of Leith Docks

**The Bongo Club**, Out of the Blue's sister venue, operating from beneath Edinburgh's Central Library is a wholly owned subsidiary. 90,000 visitors annually to performances including live music, club, theatre, spoken word / poetry

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.outoftheblue.org.uk/about/out-of-the-blue/>

## 4.2. Portobello Spaces

### Portobello Community Space Register

[Contact List](#)

[Venue Details](#)

Name	Address	Venue Contacts	Facilities
Portobello and Joppa Parish Church	1 Brunstane Road North EH15 2DL	0131 657 3401 office@portyjoppachurch.org 0131 669 5447 / 5616 stjohnsandmarymagdalenes@gmail.com	
St John's Church Hall	35 Brighton Place, EH15 1LL		
Bellfield Church Hall	Bellfield Street EH15 2BP	0131 657 5545	
St Mark's Church	287 Portobello High Street EH15 2AR	0131 629 1219	
Baptist Church Hall	189 Portobello High Street EH15 1EU	07746 392313 dtugaidtc@gmail.com 0131 669 4780	
Portobello Spiritualist Church	20a Bath Street EH15 1HD	portobellose@hotmail.com	
Portobello Pakistani Education and Cultural Centre	3 Fishwives Causeway EH15 1DF	0131 657 1581 portobellomosque@hotmail.co.uk	
St James' Church hall	Rosefield Place EH15		<b>SOLD!</b>
Portobello Town Hall	147-149 Portobello High Street EH15 1AF	0131 669 5800 / 0131 529 7124 portobellotownhall@edinburgh.gov.uk	
The Library	14 Rosefield Avenue EH15 1AU	0131 529 5558 portobello.library@edinburgh.gov.uk	
Towerbank Primary School	Figgate Bank EH15 1HX	0131 669 1551 admin@towerbank.edin.sch.uk	
St John's Primary School	Hamilton Terrace EH15 1NB	0131 669 1363 admin@st-johns.edin.sch.uk	
Toddler Hut	28 Beach Lane EH15 1LW	0131 669 6849 toddlerhut@ymail.com	
Tumbles	Portobello Promenade	0131 669 0878 info.tumbles@edinburghleisure.co.uk	
Swimming Baths	Portobello Promenade	0131 669 6888 info.psc@edinburghleisure.co.uk	
The Wash House	3 Adelphi Grove EH15 1AP	0131 669 8275	Large Hall, Medium Hall, Small Hall, Kitchen (Non-Commercial)
Edinburgh College Milton Rd	24 Milton Road East EH15 2PP	0131 669 4400	Theatre, restaurant & other spaces
Lucozade Powerleague	10 Westbank Street, EH15 1DR	0131 669 2266 portobello.web@powerleague.co.uk	
Joppa Tennis Club	Joppa Gardens EH15 2ET	joppate@hotmail.com	
The Portobello Lodge No. 226,	7/9 Figgate Street, EH15 1HL	0131 669 4496 rankin.robertson@briinternet.com	
The Salvation Army Hall	40 Bath Street EH15 1HD	0131 669 7706 portobello@salvationarmy.org.uk	
Jewel Miners Welfare Society & Social Club	56 Duddingston Pk South EH15 3LJ	0131 669 5955	Multiple halls
Duddingston Yards/ Forth Sector	Duddingston Yards, Duddingston Park South EH15 3NT	0131 201 2450 info@forthsector.org.uk	facilities for training, conferences and meetings; conference room 1 has the capacity to seat 60 theater style
Porty Rugby Club	129 Duddingston Road West EH15 3QE	0131 661 4554 enquiries@portyrugby.com	
Tribe Porty	19 Windsor Place EH15 2AJ	0131 344 7950 tribeparty@gmail.com	
Kings Manor Hotel	100 Milton Rd E EH15 2NP	0131 669 0444 reservations@kingsmanor.com	
The Tide	56 King's Rd EH15 1DX	0131 669 9408	
Dalriada	77 Promenade EH15 2EL	0131 454 4500 tcrymagill@dalriadabar.co.uk	2 side rooms
Skylark	241/243 Portobello High St EH15 2AW	0131 629 3037 contact@theskylarkportobello.com	can open on evenings normally closed
Realistic Pilates Studio	38/2 Baileyfield Road EH15 1NA	0131 669 8888 info@realistic-fitness.co.uk	Our studios are also geared up to take meetings of up to 10 participants
Duddingston Golf Club	137 Duddingston Road West EH15 3QD	0131 661 7688	For functions requiring catering, up to 70 people can be accommodated – for night time entertainment the facilities allow for up to 170.

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Halls and Venues for hire in and around Portobello, Edinburgh.

The above list is compiled and maintained by Portobello Community Council and is designed to provide an overview of the venues, halls, rooms and other spaces available to the community of Portobello.

